needy parents who were dependent on the deceased soldiers. An additional ex-gratia amount of Rs. 30,000/- has also been provided from the Army Central Welfare Fund. Besides, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has separately earmarked LPG dealership/distributorships for allocation to the next of kin of the Armed Forces Personnel killed.

The criteria for payment of ex-gratia and assistance from the NDF are the same irrespective of ranks.

Logistics for Troops in Siachen

2145. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any steps have been taken for exploring means to improve logistics for troops in Siachen; and

(b) if so, the steps taken so far to improve logistics for troops posted in the hostile terrain?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) The requirement of logistics support to the troops in Siachen is being continuously reviewed. It is the constant endeavour of the Government to provide requisite logistic support to troops to enable them to perform their assigned tasks effectively.

Some of the important measures that have been taken in this regard are listed below:—

Armament

(a) Improved automatic grenade launcher (lighter version) with upgraded ammunition.

(b) Night sight for weapons

(c) Light weight binoculars

(d) Additional sniper rifle with night sight

(e) Availability of upgraded ammunition for 155 mm gun

(f) Disposable Rocket Launchers

(g) State of art Sub Machine Carbine for special Forces

Communication

(a) Deployment of modified communication grid. Improved exchanges, radio sets and state of art radio sets.

(b) VSAT for reliable communication.

(c) High altitude cable for improved line communication.

(d) Solar panel battery charging.

Clothing

(a) Requirement of special clothing has been fully met. The prevailing practice in the MoD is to constantly review and upgrade clothing in keeping with the availabilility of better and more comfortable equipment.

Medical

(a) Issue of high calorific special ration.

(b) Installation of bio-digester for disposal of human waste.

(c) Emergency casualty evacuation equipment.

(d) Greater availability of hyperbaric chamber required for treatment of High Altitude Pulmonary Odema cases (HAPO).

(e) Central Heating System.

Habitat

(a) Provision of fibre reinforced plastic hut.

(b) Installation of generator set wherever feasible.

Movement of material

(a) Laying of pipeline for fuel oil. It is planned to lay 290 kms of pipeline of which 74 kms has already been completed.

(b) Trolleys to carry load over ice-walls.

Movement of Troops

Chatering of civil aircraft for conveyancing of troops proceeding on leave.

Welfare

(a) Provision of recreation of facilities i.e. cable TV etc.

(b) Availability of INMARSAT based PCO to enable troops to communicate with families.

(c) Washing and Dry cleaning Plant.

(d) All Weather Monitoring Station—3.

In addition to the above, some items of weapon/equipment have been contracted and are in the process of being inducted as soon as the equipment arrives in India.

These include Anti Material Rifle, Hand Held Thermal Imager, Hand Held IOE, Battlefield Surveillance Radar (MR), Battlefield Surveillance Radar(SR), all of which will be delivered in periods commencing from December, 1999. 327.5Km roads are also being surfaced at different places in this sector.

Recruitment in Army from Punjab

2146. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that army recruitment was done during the Kargil War recently;

(b) if so, whether the same exercise was undertaken in Punjab also;

(c) if so, the number of persons recruited from that State; and

(d) the number of persons recruited from the sikh community?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Only planned normal recruitment was carried out all over India during the Kargil conflict; there was no special recruitment. As part of the normal recruitment process, a total of 2135 Jawans were recruited from Punjab State during the period 1.4.99 to 31.10.99, of whom 1580 are Sikhs.

Underground posts and platforms on the border

†2147. SHRI JANESHWAR MISRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistanis making some underground posts and raised platforms on the border;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto;

(c) whether it is also a fact that these raised platforms are being made for espionage; and

(d) if so, the action being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (c) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (d) The matter has been taken up locally by the BSF with the Pakistan rangers.

News-item "Dark Dealers still Seal Defence Deals"

2148. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item appearing in the Pioneer dated November 21, 1999 captioned, "Dark Dealers still seal Defence Deals";

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.